Koviloor Acadamy

THE "A.L."

No. 130.
(Thirteenth Edition.)

BRIGHT STORY READERS.

Grade III.

THE BLUE BIRD.

By
MADAME D'AULNOY.

Prepared by W. H. WEBSTER.

Printed in Great Britain

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ஊர் காரைகுடி

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the finest fruit-trees in the kingdom. Beyond the gardens were the woods. Here the deer and wild boar roamed at will, and many were the times that the king and his nobles rode forth in chase of them.

3. After living happily and ruling his land well for many years, this king was stricken with a great sorrow. His queen, whom he dearly loved, caught a severe cold and became ill. In spite of all that the cleverest doctors in the land could do, the poor lady grew worse day by day, and, in the end, she died.

4. The grief of the poor king at the loss of

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his dear wife can hardly be told. He shut himself up in a small room for eight whole days, and would not speak to anyone; nor would he allow anyone to see him, except the servant who brought him his food. Of this he ate only a very little; often, indeed, he left it quite untouched, so great was his sadness.

5. At the end of the eight days, he came once more among his people. But he was not at all like the king he used to be. He never joined now in the hunt or in any other sport. He seldom spoke to those about him, and he was never seen to smile. His people, who loved him very dearly (for he was a good king and a wise ruler), began to be afraid that he, too, would fall ill and die.

6. So his people did all they could think of to make him feel bright and happy again. Some talked to him of his dead queen, hoping that their praises of her goodness might a little comfort him. Others told him amusing stories, or made jokes, thinking that, if they could make the king laugh, he would forget his sorrow.

7. His wise men tried to interest him by telling him what was taking place in other parts of his land. But all in vain! The king gave no heed to them; it seemed that he did not even hear them.

8. Now, on a certain day, there came up to the king a woman whom he had never seen

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before. She was dressed altogether in black crape; her face was hidden by a long, black veil, and she wore a black mantle and other garments of deep mourning. She wept and sobbed so loudly, and so long without saying a word, that the king was filled with wonder, and asked her to tell him what was the matter.

9. The woman made the rather strange answer that, unlike all the others, she had come, not to lessen his grief, but to make it greater; for what (she said) was more right and proper than that a man should sorrow for a good wife?

10. As for herself, she had had the best husband in all the world; but, alas! he was dead, and she would weep for him as long as she lived. Here she fell once more to weeping and sobbing; and the king, touched by her grief, began also to cry aloud.

11. He treated this woman more kindly than anyone else who had spoken to him. He talked to her of all the good things that his dear wife used to do; and she, on the other hand, told him how good her beloved husband had been to every one.

12. This talk of their dear lost ones seemed to give much pleasure to both of them. Indeed, they went on and on until they could not say another word about the greatness of their losses and the depth of their sorrows.

13. But, all this time, a sly thought was hidden

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in the woman's mind. When she saw that she had wept long enough, she raised her veil just a little, pretending to dry her eyes; but really she did so, that the king could see her face.

14. Although she was no longer young, she was still beautiful. She had dark-blue eyes, and her cheeks were quite rosy. The king looked at her very closely, as he felt sorry for the poor woman, who seemed to be in such grief.

15. The two talked with each other day after day. Little by little, the king began to speak less of his dead queen and her many good deeds, and at last he altogether ceased to speak of her. The widow still said she would always go on grieving for her dead husband. But the king begged of her not to let her sorrow last for ever, for that would be the spoiling of all the rest of her life; and, in the end, to the surprise of every one, he asked the widow to be his wife.

16. This was just what she wanted, for she had made up her mind from their first meeting that the king should be her next husband. She soon cast aside her mourning garments, and had new gowns of green and rose colour made for the wedding. This took place amid great feasting and rejoicing, for the nobles and the people were glad to see that their king was happy once again.

17. The king had only one daughter, and she was fifteen years old at the time that her father

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married the widow. She was a most beautiful maiden—so pretty, in fact, that she was named Florine,* because, people said, she was lovelier than the fairest flowers.

18. But she was not at all vain, or fond of finery. She did not care to dress in grand robes, but liked better to have a neat gown of silk or muslin, fastened round the waist by a belt of which the clasp was set with jewels. And a garland of flowers was often set like a simple crown on her lovely brown hair.

19. The new queen sent for her own daughter, who was called Amabel,† to come to live at the palace. The name Amabel means "lovable"; but, I am sorry to say, this princess did not deserve to be so prettily called. In fact, she was quite the reverse of lovable. She was of a sulky, spiteful nature, and had a bad temper. This often caused her to do things that were both wicked and cruel to people whom she did not like.

20. She had been brought up by her god-mother, the fairy Mazilla,‡ and this had not made her any better. For the fairy had let Amabel have so much of her own way that she had become very selfish.

21. Amabel was not pretty, either. Her skin was not soft like velvet, as was Florine's, but it

* Pronounce *flo-reen'*—*o* as in "lo"; *ee* as in "seen."
† " *ăm'-a-bel*—*ă* as in "am"; *a* as in "sofa"; *e* as in "bell."
‡ " *măz'-a*—*ă* as in "am" *a* as in "sofa."

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was coarse and yellow; her thick, black hair was always untidy, and looked as if it had not been brushed or combed for weeks. But, in spite of all this, the queen loved her daughter very dearly, and thought that there was no one in all the world so good and so pretty as her Amabel.

22. She was never tired of talking to the king about her daughter's goodness; and, at the same time, she tried to make him believe that Florine was not nearly so good as people said, and that she was not worthy of all the love that folk showed towards her. The queen said these false things to draw her husband's affection away from his daughter.

23. Amabel, too, disliked Florine very much; and seldom a day passed without the mother and daughter playing some trick upon her. But Florine was very sensible, as well as kind-hearted, and she never made a fuss about their mischief. She took but little notice of it, and tried only to keep out of their way as much as she could.

CHAPTER II.

THE COMING OF KING CHARMING.

1. One day, the king said to the queen, "My dear, both Amabel and Florine are now old enough to be married. We will give one of

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them to be the wife of the first prince who comes to visit us."

2. "You are right, my Lord King!" replied the queen. "I think, however, that my daughter Amabel should be married first. She is older than Florine, and, as she is a hundred times fairer, there can be no doubt that we should provide for her, before we do so for Florine."

"Very well, my dear!" said the king, who was too easy-going to argue, and too good-natured to quarrel with anyone. "It shall be as you wish. You can arrange matters just as you please."

3. Some little time after, a messenger came to the palace from King Charming, to say that he was coming to pay them a visit. Now, I must tell you that no prince was ever more brave and noble in deed, or more gentle in manner, than King Charming; and, also, his wealth was very great indeed. So, you see, he was in every way suited to be the husband of a princess.

4. As soon as the queen heard that King Charming intended to visit the palace, she got together all the tailors, dressmakers, lace-makers, and other work-people of every kind, and set them to work at making and trimming new dresses for her own daughter.

5. As for Florine, the queen said that she had plenty of nice dresses already, and did not need any new ones. Besides, it was Amabel who was

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to be given as wife to King Charming, and therefore it was she and not Florine who should be made to look as pretty as possible.

6. On the morning of the day that King Charming was to arrive, the queen bribed Florine's maids to take and hide all her best dresses and her jewels, so that she would not be able to wear them and look her nicest. When Florine went to dress for the coming of her father's guest, she could not find so much as a bit of ribbon with which to deck herself out.

7. She knew quite well who had caused her to be treated thus. She then sent servants to the town to purchase some fine clothes from the merchants there. But the merchants said that they had been forbidden by the queen to sell her anything.

8. So Florine had nothing to wear but one shabby little old dress; and she felt so ashamed of it that, when King Charming arrived at the palace, she sat in a corner of the hall, as far away from the rest as she could get.

9. The king and queen received their royal visitor with much kindness and great state, and the queen presented her daughter to him. Amabel was dressed in a splendid robe, richly adorned with gold and silver thread and sparkling gems. But even this did not make her handsome.

10. King Charming did not at all like the look

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of her, and very soon turned his head aside. The queen thought he did this because he was dazzled by the jewels that Amabel was wearing, and also by her beauty; and she tried her best to keep her daughter by his side. By and by, he asked if there was not another princess, called Florine, and whether she was not at home.

11. "Yes," said Amabel, pointing to Florine, "she is yonder! She is hiding herself in the corner, because of her mean and shabby gown."

Florine blushed at this spiteful remark, and looked at that moment so very lovely, that King Charming was quite startled. At once rising from his seat, he made her a low bow, and said, "Princess! your own beauty is so great that you have no need of fine dresses or any other ornament."

12. "Your Majesty," replied Florine, "I must tell you it is not my custom to wear so poor a dress as this; I had rather you took no notice of me, now that I look so much beneath my proper rank."

"It would be impossible," cried King Charming, "for so lovely a princess to be anywhere without drawing the gaze of all others towards her."

13. "Sire," said the queen, who was very much vexed that King Charming should make all these pretty speeches about Florine, while taking little or no notice of her own daughter, Amabel, "it is

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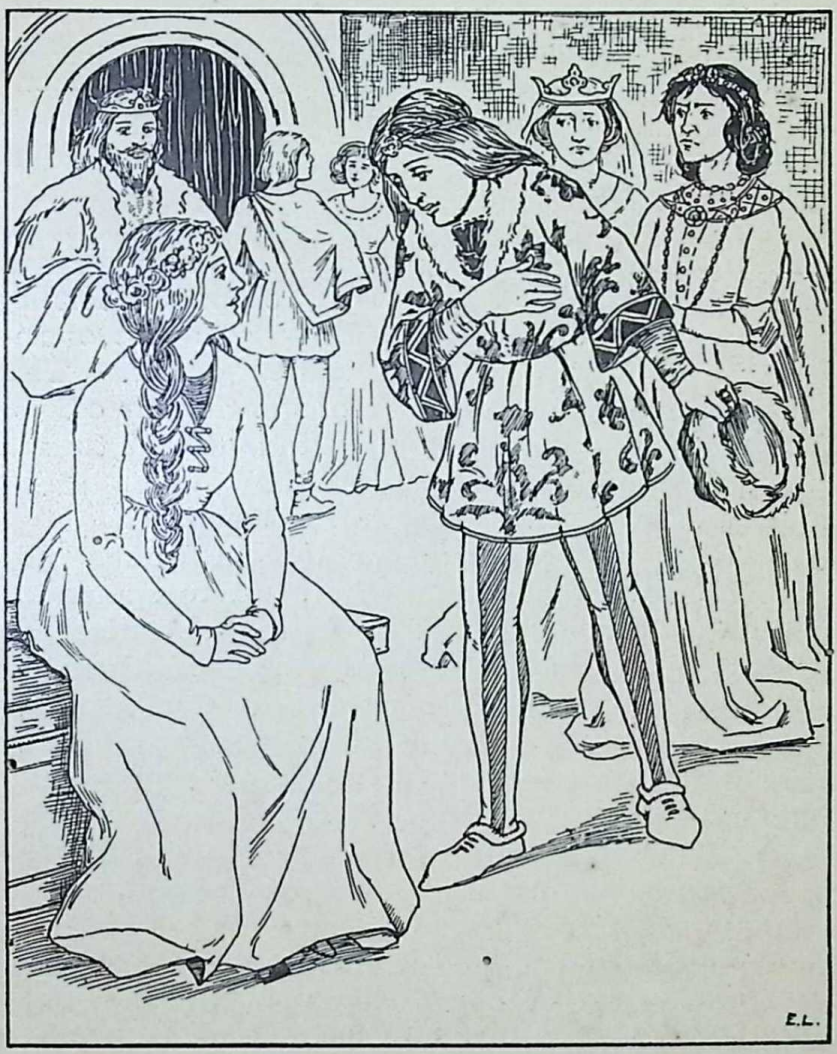
very kind of you to speak thus to Florine—but may I tell you that you are making a mistake? The maid is quite vain enough already, and your praises will not improve her, I am afraid."

14. King Charming saw at once why the queen said this, but it made no difference to him. He got up from his seat, went and sat beside Florine, and stayed talking with her for more than three whole hours, thus letting every one see how much he admired her.

15. The queen was very angry that King Charming should take so much notice of Florine; and Amabel was vexed that he should prefer to talk to Florine rather than to herself. Both mother and daughter went to the king, and complained to him that Florine was trying to make King Charming dislike Amabel, so that she herself could win his love and become his wife.

16. At last, they got the king to consent that, so long as King Charming remained his guest, Florine should be shut up in a tower in a distant part of the palace, where the two could not see each other.

17. That same afternoon, as soon as Florine had gone to her room, four men, with masks over their faces, seized her and carried her off to a lonely room at the top of the tower. Here they left her in the deepest distress, for she knew well enough that this had been done in order to prevent her from seeing King Charming again.



'He made her a low bow.'—*Page* 9.

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She was already very much pleased with the kind notice which he had taken of her, and she felt that she would dearly love to be his queen.

CHAPTER III.

KING CHARMING AND FLORINE.

1. Now King Charming did not know anything about this evil treatment of poor Florine, and he looked forward quite eagerly to the evening, when he hoped to see her again. The queen had chosen a number of gentlemen of the court to keep near her guest and attend to his wants, and he began to talk to them about the beauty and gentleness of Florine.

2. They had been ordered by the queen not to say anything good about her, but to speak all the ill they could; and they dared not disobey.

"Ah! your Majesty," said one of them to King Charming, "you do not know the Princess Florine as well as we do, or you would not speak of her so highly. It is true she is very pretty; no one can deny that. But what is beauty without *goodness?* The princess has a very bad temper, and nothing pleases her for very long."

3. "Indeed, that is quite true," said another, "and, I must tell you, your Majesty, she is most unkind to her friends, and often quite cruel to her servants."

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"And she is *so* untidy, and *such* a miser," said a third. "The king, her father, gives her plenty of money to buy dresses suited to her rank as a princess, but she will not use it. She would rather wear any sort of poor dress, such as would become only a poor shepherd-girl; and she hoards the money in some secret place!"

4. When King Charming heard all these false and cruel speeches about Florine, they made him so very angry that he could hardly bear to listen to the gentlemen any longer.

"No!" he said, in his own mind, "all this cannot be true. It is not possible that so fair and gentle-looking a maiden as Florine would be so unkind and worthless, and even cruel, as they say.

5. "It is true that she was poorly dressed when I saw her at first—but the shame she felt and the manner in which she hid herself prove that she was not used to such attire. It is the queen, I am sure, who has bidden them to speak thus falsely. She wishes me to think well of her daughter Amabel, and I do not doubt but that Amabel herself envies Florine because of her beauty."

6. While these thoughts were passing through the mind of King Charming, the gentlemen about him saw, from his manner, that he was not at all pleased by their evil-speaking of Florine. One of them, who was more cunning

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than the others, and who wished to find out exactly what the prince thought and how he felt about Florine, now quite changed the drift of the talk, and began to speak well of her.

7. "I do not agree with these gentlemen, your Majesty," said he. "To me, the princess has always seemed to be as good and kind as she is beautiful. She is never tired of trying to help those about her, and to make them happy. And if she does not spend all her money on fine dresses—well, surely she has a right to do as she pleases with what is her own."

8. At once, King Charming's manner changed. His eyes lighted up with joy, and he joined in the talk quite gaily. The queen's gentlemen had now no doubt at all that he had fallen deeply in love with the Princess Florine.

9. The queen was most anxious to learn how King Charming felt towards her daughter Amabel. As soon as he had gone to his room, she sent for the gentlemen, and spent a good part of the night in asking them questions. She bade them tell her all that he had said and done, and what they thought about the matter.

Everything they told her only made her feel surer than ever that King Charming *had* fallen in love with Florine, and not with Amabel as she wished.

10. Now, what was Florine doing all this time? In deep distress she lay on the floor of the small

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room at the top of the tower to which the masked men had carried her; and in fear and trembling she wondered what would happen next.

11. "Ah me!" she sighed, "this would have been easier to bear, if they had brought me here before I had seen that noble King Charming. The remembrance of his kindness to me only makes this trouble greater. I have no doubt that it is to keep me from seeing him that the queen has done this. Does it not seem as if the beauty which Heaven has given me is to be the cause of my unhappiness?"

Then she wept and sobbed so bitterly that even her worst enemy would have been sorry to behold her in such distress. Thus the night passed.

12. The queen was most wishful to gain the favour of King Charming, and so she paid him every attention. Anything that he was likely to want was there for him before he could ask for it. She sent him presents of the most splendid and costly robes, made in the newest fashion of that country, and, moreover, she asked the king, her husband, to bestow upon him the honour of knighthood.

13. The badge of the knights of this country was a golden heart, covered with enamel of the colour of a flame. But the badge that was made especially for King Charming, and sent to him by the queen, was cut from a single ruby as large as an egg.

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The chain from which it hung, instead of being of gold, consisted of the largest and finest pearls that it was possible to get. In fact, since the world began, nothing so handsome had been seen or worn before. King Charming, at the sight of it, was so filled with wonder that he could not speak a word, not even to thank his hostess for her gift.

14. Next, he was presented with a lovely book, the leaves of which were of the finest parchment, and the clasp and binding were covered with gold and jewels. In this book, the rules of the order of knighthood had been written, in beautifully coloured letters, by the most famous artists of that time.

"Sir King!" said the noble who knelt to offer him the book, "the princess, whom you have seen, sends you this present, and begs that you will be her knight."

15. On hearing this, the new knight thought at once of the princess whom he loved.

"What!" cried he, "the lovely Princess Florine! How happy I am that she remembers me in so generous a manner!"

"You have made a mistake in the name, your Majesty," hastily said the noble. "We do not come from Princess Florine. It is the lovely Princess Amabel who sends you these gifts."

16. "Ah! then, it is Amabel who wishes me to be her knight," said King Charming, in a

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voice which showed that he was far from being glad or pleased. "I am sorry not to be able to take this honour upon me, but, you see, a king is not quite his own master, and so cannot do always as he would. I know well the duties of a knight, and would like to fulfil them all; but I would rather put aside the honour that the princess offers me, than, taking it, prove myself unworthy."

17. So saying, he put the heart, the chain of pearls, and the book back into the casket in which they had been brought, and returned them to the queen and her daughter. You can imagine how angry they both were that the strange king should have treated their costly gifts in such a cool manner!

CHAPTER IV.

THE TRICK PLAYED UPON KING CHARMING.

1. King Charming visited the king and queen as often as he had the chance, in the hope that he might find Florine in their room. His eyes turned everywhere in search of her. The moment he heard anyone come into the room, he turned sharply round to see who it was; and, not seeing his love, he now seemed always restless and unhappy.

2. The queen knew well enough what was passing in his mind, but she gave him no sign

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that she did. Instead of that, she talked to him of the pleasure-parties they would have; and sometimes the answers he gave to her were quite foolish, showing that his thoughts were elsewhere, and that he was not listening to her.

3. At last, he asked the queen plainly, "Where is the Princess Florine?"

"Sir," replied the queen in anger, "the king, her father, has forbidden her to leave her room until my daughter Amabel is married."

4. "And what reason can he have," exclaimed King Charming, "for keeping so fair a lady a prisoner?"

"I know not," answered the queen, "and if I did, I should not think myself bound to tell you."

5. King Charming's wrath was kindled mightily by these words. He cast a look of anger at Amabel, for he felt sure that it was owing to her that he was robbed of the pleasure of seeing the princess. Without saying another word, he rose from his seat, and walked hastily out of the queen's presence.

6. When he was again in his own room, he called to him a young prince who had come with him, and of whom he was very fond. He told this prince, that, no matter how much it cost, he was to bribe one of those who waited upon the Princess Florine, so that he might have means to speak with her for a moment.

7. The prince soon found some of the ladies

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of the palace who were willing to listen to him, and to do as he wished. One of them promised him that Florine should, that very evening, be at a little low window which looked upon the garden.

8. From this window, said the lady, she could easily talk with King Charming, if he would only take the very greatest care that no one else saw or heard him. "For," she added, "the king and queen are so severe, that, if they find I have given any help to your master, they will put me to death at once."

9. The young prince was so delighted at his success that, in return for her kind service, he promised the lady anything she wished. Then he went at once to tell his royal master what he had arranged, and at what time King Charming was to see the princess.

10. But the lady was false and mean, for she went at once to the queen, told her the whole secret, and asked what she should do. The queen thereupon made up her mind to place her daughter Amabel at the window, so that *she* could talk with King Charming. She first told her daughter very carefully what she must do and say; and Amabel, although she was so stupid, managed to understand her, so that, when the time came, she played her part not so badly.

11. The night was so very dark that King Charming would not have been able to discover

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the trick that was being played upon him, even if the thought of it had entered his mind. So, full of joy and happiness, he drew near to the window, and said to Amabel all the sweet, pretty things that he meant for Florine, to show her how much he loved her.

12. Amabel, making the most of her chance, pretended to be Florine, and told the king that she was the most unhappy princess alive, to be so shut up in prison away from him. She said, too, that she had no hope of being set free, and that she must continue to suffer thus, until the queen's daughter should be married.

13. King Charming told her, over and over again, that *she* had already won his heart, and that, if she would have him for her husband, he would be only too happy to share his crown and throne with her. Then he drew from his finger a most lovely ring; placing it on Amabel's, he begged her to receive it as a token of his unchanging love; he asked her, too, to try and escape from the palace, and flee with him to some place where they could be married.

14. To all these fine speeches Amabel gave the best answers that she could. King Charming noticed that they were not very sensible, but he thought that this was because the princess was fearful of being found out, and could not therefore speak her best. Before leaving her, he begged her to come again to the window the next night,

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at the same hour; and this she very willingly promised to do.

15. When Amabel told her mother what had come of this meeting, the queen was delighted at her success, for now she felt sure that matters would go just as they both wished. And, indeed, the next night, the time for the escape was duly agreed upon between King Charming and Amabel.

16. At the appointed hour, King Charming came to carry off his dear one in a flying chariot, drawn by winged frogs, which had been given to him by a friend who was a great enchanter; and the queen, who knew all that was going on, took great care that there should be nothing and nobody in the way to prevent King Charming from carrying out his purpose.

17. The night was pitch dark. Amabel stole out quietly and secretly, by a little door, where King Charming met her with open arms. Again and again he promised her his undying love, as he led her to his chariot. And, as he had no wish to go flying about for ever without marrying the lady whom he so dearly loved, he asked her where she would like the wedding to take place.

18. "My dear Prince," replied Amabel, "my godmother is a very famous fairy called Mazilla, and I should so much like to go and visit her at her castle, for there could be no better place than this for our marriage."

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19. As a matter of fact, Amabel was not at all sure, even now, that she would secure King Charming for her husband, and she wanted the help and advice of the fairy.

CHAPTER V.

A WONDERFUL CHANGE.

1. Although King Charming did not know the way to Mazilla's castle, he had only to tell his frogs to take him there, and he arrived in a very short time; for these wonderful creatures knew the whole map of the world, and could go straight to any place that they were told of.

2. The castle was lit up so brightly with hundreds of lamps, that King Charming would have found out his mistake at once, if the Princess Amabel had not covered her face with a thick veil. Having asked to see her godmother alone, Amabel told the fairy how she had managed to deceive King Charming, and begged her, at the same time, to help her to make her peace with him.

3. "But, my dear goddaughter," said the fairy, "that will be no easy matter. He is much too fond of Florine to give in without a great deal of trouble, and I feel sure he will disappoint us. For your sake, however, I will try my best."

4. While they were talking thus, the king waited for them in the hall, the walls of which

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were of diamonds. So clear and pure were these, that through them he saw Amabel and Mazilla talking together! He was amazed, and thought he must be dreaming.

5. "What!" said he, half aloud, "is it possible that I have been tricked? What evil power has brought Amabel, our enemy, hither? Has she come to prevent our marriage? And I see nothing of Florine! Can her father have followed us here?"

6. All manner of thoughts came into his mind, and he began to be in despair. But matters looked still worse, when presently the two women came into the room, and Mazilla said, in a commanding tone:—

"King Charming, here is the Princess Amabel whom you have promised to marry; she is my goddaughter, and I desire that the marriage between you should take place at once."

7. "What!" cried the king, in amazement, "*I* marry *her!* You must think me a very easy-going person, to make such a demand of me. I have made her no promise whatever, and if she has told you that I did, it is not . . . ."

"Stop!" said the fairy. "You must not speak to me in that manner. You must be more respectful to a person of my rank."

"I will gladly pay you all the respect and honour that are due to you, if you will restore to me my princess," replied King Charming.

8. "And am *I* not your princess, faithless

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man?" exclaimed Amabel, showing him the ring which he had given her at the window. "To whom did you give this ring as a sure token of your love? With whom did you talk at the little window, if not with me?"

"Ah! then I have been tricked and deceived," he burst out in hot anger. "But I will *not* be your victim. What ho! Quick there! my frogs! my frogs! I would depart from this place at once."

9. "Stay!" said Mazilla, "it is not in your power to do so, unless I give you leave."

So saying, she touched him; and, by the magic of her touch, his feet were fixed to the floor as fast as if they had been nailed to it.

10. "Do not think you will thus bend me to your will," cried the king. "You may stone me to death! You may tear me to pieces! But never, never, NEVER will I marry anyone but Florine! On her, and on her only, my heart is set. Nor shall you turn me from her, use your evil powers as you will."

11. Mazilla tried all the ways and means she could think of—kindness, threats of punishment, promises of great wealth and power—to make King Charming change his mind. In turns Amabel wept, begged, flew into a passion, and calmed down again. But it was all of no use; the king said not another word. He stood there looking at them with a most scornful air, and took not the least notice of anything they said to him.

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12. Twenty days and nights passed in this manner, during which time Amabel and her god-mother never ceased to talk; they never ate, never slept, never even sat down. At last the fairy Mazilla, quite tired out, could bear the king's silence no longer, and she said to him:—

"Well, since you are so stubborn and will not listen to reason, choose at once! You shall either marry my goddaughter, or you shall suffer a seven years' punishment for breaking the promise which you have made to her."

13. King Charming now broke his long silence, and exclaimed in scorn, "Do what you like with me, so long as you set me free from *this* creature!"

"I am quite as good as *you* are," said Amabel, in a passion. "A mean sort of a king you must be, with your miserable little frog-carriage, to come into my country and insult me as you have done! If you had any sense of honour at all, you would keep your promise to me."

14. "*You*, of all persons in the world, do well to talk of *honour*," said the king, in a mocking tone. "I begin to think I am foolish not to take so honourable a lady to be my queen."

"She shall never be your wife," cried Mazilla, in a rage. "You may fly out of that window as soon as you wish. For the next seven years, you shall be a blue bird."

15. As she said this, the king's person underwent a complete and very wonderful change.

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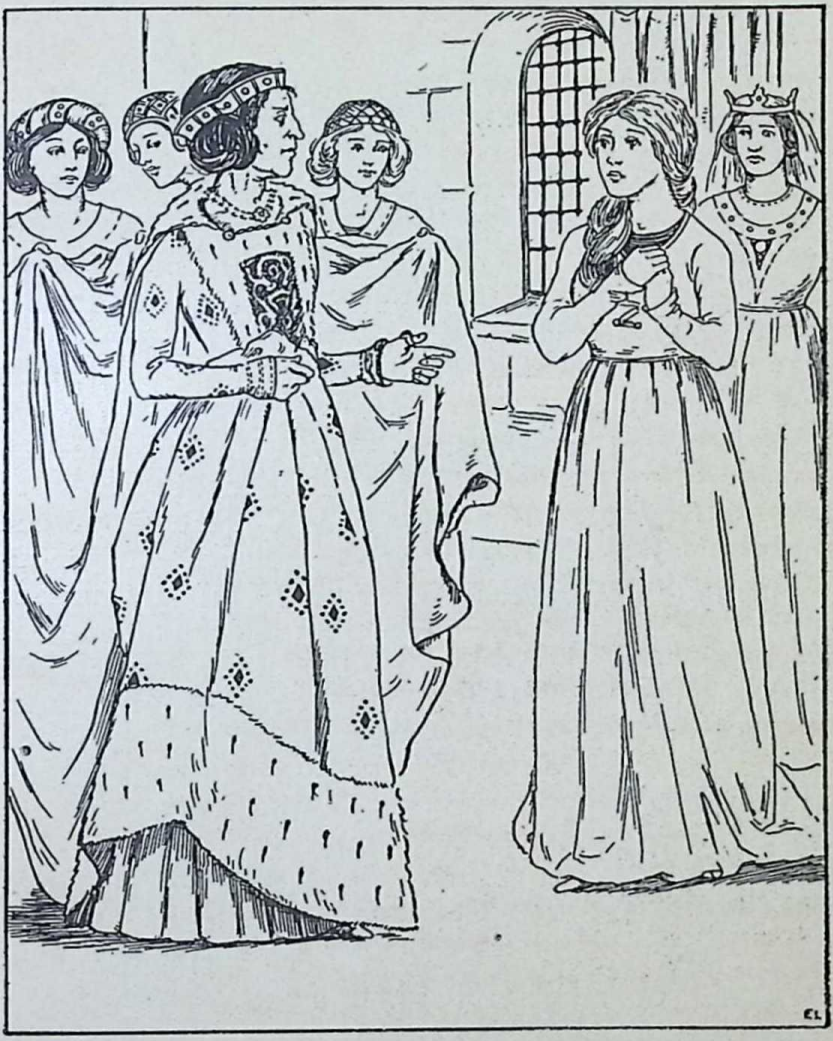
His arms became covered with feathers, and they turned into wings; his body dwindled to quite a small size, and fine feathers of the richest sky-blue colour grew all over it; his eyes became round, and were bright as two stars; his nose was changed into an ivory beak, and on his head was erected a crest of white feathers! He could now sing beautifully; but while he gained a bird's gift of song, he did not lose the power of human speech!

16. King Charming uttered a cry of despair. And then he flew through an open window as fast as his wings could carry him, for he was anxious to escape from Mazilla's horrible palace. Deeply moved with grief at the change in his condition, King Charming flew for many miles before he stopped to rest in a tree.

17. "Where can my enemies have hidden my fair princess?" he asked himself—for he did not yet know that he had left her in the tower, and that it was Amabel who had ridden with him in his carriage. "What has become of her? Has the cruel queen put her to death, or is she still alive, but a prisoner? Where shall I look for her? Shall I really have to spend seven long years without her? Perhaps during that time, if she still lives, they may force her to marry someone else—and then I shall have lost her for ever!"



'On her thumb . . . was the lovely ring.'—*Page* 28.

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CHAPTER VI.

FLORINE'S HARD FATE.

1. But to return to Amabel—the fairy Mazilla sent her back to the queen, who was most anxious to hear how the wedding had passed off. When she saw her daughter, and heard from her lips all that had taken place, she flew into a terrible rage.

"I will make our Miss Florine repent, and repent more than once, that she has won the love and favour of King Charming," said the queen.

2. So the queen went up into the tower with Amabel, who was dressed in the richest of the clothes that had been made ready for her wedding. On her head was a crown of diamonds; and the daughters of three of the richest barons in the land held up the train of her robe.

3. On her thumb, so as to be quite plain for all to see, was the lovely ring which Florine had noticed on the finger of King Charming, the day that he had come to the palace. Florine was greatly surprised to see Amabel in such a splendid gown, and still more amazed that she was wearing King Charming's ring.

4. "My daughter has come to show you the presents she has received in honour of her wedding," said the queen. "She has married King Charming. He loves her very dearly, and never

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before has there been such a happy pair as they are."

5. Thereupon she and Princess Amabel showed to the amazed Florine a great quantity of rich dress-stuff, worked with patterns in gold and silver thread; and there were also jewels and lace and ribbons, all contained in baskets richly ornamented with work in gold. In displaying all these to Florine, Amabel took good care to let her have a full view of King Charming's beautiful ring, so that she must needs believe what was now told her.

6. At last Florine, in great grief, begged them to take all these things away from her. She told them that, from this time forth, she would wear none but black garments; she hoped that she would soon be dead, as there was now nothing for her to live for. As she said this, so great was her sorrow, that she fainted away.

7. The cruel queen, delighted at her success, would not allow anyone to assist Florine, but left her lying just as she had fallen. Then she went to the king, and told him that Florine was so madly in love with King Charming that she was doing the most foolish things; and, she added, they would have to take great care that she did not leave the tower.

8. The king told his queen to do just what she thought best for Florine, and said that, whatever it was, he would regard it as most right and proper.

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9. When the Princess Florine recovered from her fainting fit, it was night. She began to think upon the cruel manner in which the queen had treated her. This, and, as it seemed, the certainty that she had lost for ever all chance of becoming the wife of King Charming, whom she loved so dearly, filled her with deep grief.

10. She sat down by the open window, and gave way to her sorrow in loud cries and bitter tears. When the day dawned, she closed the window, lest anyone should see her; but, within her room, she still went on weeping.

11. The following night, she again opened the window, and sat by it, sobbing and sighing and moaning over her hard fate. Morning dawned again, and once more she closed the window, and sat weeping in a far corner of the room.

12. In the meantime, King Charming, or, as we must now call him, the beautiful Blue Bird, had come back to the palace, and he never ceased flying round and round it. He now felt certain that his beautiful Florine was shut up in it. He went as near to the windows as he dared, in order to see who was in the rooms of the palace.

13. He was, however, in such great dread of being discovered by the Princess Amabel, who, of course, would know him at once, that he dared not make so close a search for his dear one as he would have liked.

14. "It will cost me my life," he said to himself,

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"if the cruel queen and her daughter find out where I am, for they will surely try and revenge themselves upon me. I must keep well out of their reach, or I shall be in the greatest danger."

This thought made him act with the greatest care; and, as a rule, the Blue Bird did not sing except during the night.

15. Now, there happened to be a very lofty tree just in front of the window at which Florine sat, and in this tree the Blue Bird came and perched one evening, before beginning his song. Hardly had he come there, when the window was opened, and he heard the voice of a lady say:—

"How much longer shall I have to suffer? Why, oh! why can I not die? Others, whose lives are full of happiness, are stricken down—but I, who would gladly leave this world, must live on in sorrow and pain. Oh, cruel queen! what harm have I done to you that you should keep me a prisoner in this horrible tower?"

16. The Blue Bird heard every word that the lady said, and he was filled with surprise. He stayed in the tree all night, and waited eagerly for the daylight to come, so that he could see who the lady was that had poured forth a complaint of such deep trouble. But before the dawn began to redden the eastern sky, the lady of sorrow had shut the window and gone out of sight.

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17. He spread his wings, and flew away; but, as you may be sure, he did not fail to return to the same place next night. The moon was then shining brightly; and, by its light, the Blue Bird saw a girl sitting by the window.

18. "Alas!" she cried, "what have I done that I should be treated thus? How is it that I, who am the daughter of a king, and was once so dearly loved by my father, am now shut up in this lonely tower, and am treated so harshly?"

19. The Blue Bird listened most carefully for every word; and, as he did so, he became more and more certain that this was his dear princess, who was crying out against her hard lot.

20. "Dear Florine!" he called from his perch on the branch (you remember that, though now a bird, he could still talk like a man), "why is it that you speak so sadly and so bitterly? Surely there is *some* way of removing your trouble."

"Ah! who is it that speaks such words of comfort to me?" she asked, for she could not guess whence the voice came.

21. "A most unhappy king," replied the Blue Bird, "one who loves you, and who will never love anyone else but you!"

And with these words he flew to the window.

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CHAPTER VII.

FLORINE AND KING CHARMING MEET AGAIN.

1. Florine was at first much alarmed at the sight of a bird so strange, which spoke with as much sense as if it had been a man, and yet in tones as sweet as those of a nightingale. But the beauty of its blue feathers, and the soothing words which it uttered, soon caused all her fear to pass away.

2. "Do I, in very truth, see and talk with you again, my own Princess?" the Blue Bird cried. "Oh! I could almost die with happiness, that I have once more found you. But my joy is turned to sorrow that I should discover you in prison; and I am saddened also because, for seven years to come, I must suffer this change of form which the wicked arts of Mazilla have brought about."

"And who *are* you, you charming bird?" asked the princess, stroking his feathers gently.

3. "You call me by my name," said the Blue Bird, rather sadly, "and yet you pretend not to know me."

"What!" cried the Princess, "is it possible that the little bird in my hand is King Charming? It surely cannot be."

4. "Alas, fair Florine, it is but too true!" replied the bird, "and the one thing that helps to

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lighten my sadness is the fact that I have agreed to suffer this, rather than give up my love for you."

5. "For *me!*" said Florine in surprise. "Ah! you are trying to deceive me; but you cannot, I assure you. I know that you have married Amabel. I saw your ring on her hand, and she showed me all the diamonds that you have given to her. She came to me here, in my prison, wearing the rich crown and robe that you gave her on your wedding-day."

6. "What! you saw Amabel decked out with gifts from *me!*" cried the Blue Bird. "And did she dare to tell you that those jewels were my presents? Oh! that I might bring her to just punishment for telling such wicked falsehoods! Believe me, dear Princess, she and her mother tried to deceive me; and, by using your name, they really did manage to make me run away with Amabel. But as soon as I found out my mistake and her deceit, I tried to get free from her; and I chose rather to become a Blue Bird for seven years, than give up my love for you."

7. Florine was so delighted to hear her dear king thus assure her of his love, that she forgot all about her own sadness. She said all the kind things she could think of, to cheer him in his sad misfortune; and she vowed to him that she would gladly have suffered twice as much for his sake as he was enduring for hers. So in sweet speech the night-hours swiftly passed.

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8. The day now dawned; and most of the servants and officers about the palace had already begun their day's duties, before Florine and the Blue Bird could cease talking, or could bring themselves to take leave of each other. They were very sad at having to part, but they promised to meet again every night after this.

9. Their delight in having found each other was so great that words fail to describe it. Each offered thanks to the kindly powers of Love and Good Fortune that had brought them together again; but Florine's happiness was lessened by the thought of the danger that the Blue Bird would constantly be in.

10. "Who will protect him from the fowlers," she asked herself, "or from the sharp claws of eagles or of the hungry hawk? These would devour him none the less greedily that he is really a great king, though but a little bird in form! What would become of me, if, some day, his light and beautiful feathers were blown to my window, and by these I should surely know that he had fallen a prey, and was lost to me for ever?"

11. These thoughts prevented the poor princess from closing her eyes in sleep. When one is deeply in love, how many fears arise for the safety of the beloved! So she passed the day in tears and tremblings till the hour came for her to return to her seat at the window.

12. The Blue Bird, hidden safely in the hollow

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of a tree, had been thinking of his dear princess all day long. "How happy I am," he said, "to have found her again! How charming she is! How good of her to be so kind and gentle with me!" And he felt as if the seven years which must pass before he could marry the princess, would never come to an end.

13. As he was anxious to do everything he could that would please Florine, the Blue Bird flew to his own kingdom, and went to his palace. He entered his own room through a little opening in a broken pane of glass, and chose a pair of diamond ear-rings as a gift for his beloved—so perfect in their loveliness were these, that there was not their like in all the world!

14. That evening he took them, in his ivory beak, to Florine; and he begged her to put them on. "I would do so willingly," she said, "if you came to see me by daylight; but as I speak to you only in the darkness, how would it then be worth while to wear them?"

15. The Blue Bird promised that he would come to the tower at any hour the princess liked. Then she put the ear-rings in her ears; and that night, like the previous one, was spent in sweet talk.

16. Next day, the Blue Bird returned again to his kingdom, went to his palace, and entered it, as before, by means of the broken pane. This time he brought away a pair of the richest bracelets that were ever seen. Each was made of a

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single large emerald, from the midst of which a clever jeweller had cut out an opening through which the wearer might pass her hand and wrist.

17. "Do you think," said the princess, "that my love for you needs these gifts to strengthen it? Ah! if you do, how little do you know my heart!"

"No, indeed, my dear Princess!" replied he. "It is not to increase your love that I bring you trinkets and trifles such as these. But they will serve to remind you of me when I am absent, and it gives me pleasure to offer them to you!"

18. The following night, the Blue Bird, still eager to show his great love for the princess, brought her a lovely little watch. It was of just the right size to suit a lady, and its case was made from a single pearl of great beauty. How Florine was charmed with it!

"And yet," said Florine, "how little need have I of a watch! For, when you are not here, the hours seem to be never-ending, and when you *are* with me, they pass like a dream; so that in neither case can I reckon the time as other people do."

CHAPTER VIII.

FLORINE HAS OTHER VISITORS.

1. As soon as daylight appeared, the bird flew back to the hollow tree, where he lived on fruit. Sometimes he would sing the most beautiful

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songs, which filled with delight all who passed that way. They could hear him well, but they could see no one; and so the fancy began to spread abroad that the voice was that of a spirit.

2. This fancy soon became so common, that no one dared to enter the wood, for fear of disturbing the spirit, and so making it angry. This made it all the better for the Blue Bird, who could now come at any time and see his princess in safety. Never a day passed but he brought her some rich present—a necklace of pearls, a diamond ring of rare workmanship, or most beautiful earrings.

3. The princess never adorned herself in these things except at night, when she did so to please the king; during the day, having no other place to put her fine things in, she hid them in a large box in which she kept her clothes.

4. Two years passed away like this, and Florine never once grumbled about being shut up in the tower. And how could she? For, though she was a prisoner, they were two very happy years to her. She talked with her dear king the whole night long.

5. Although the Blue Bird never went anywhere else, nor saw anyone save his beloved, but spent the day in the hollow tree, and though the princess was never out of her room in the tower, yet they always had a great deal to talk about; for the great love that they had for each

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other was a subject on which they could have talked for ever.

6. Meantime, the queen, who had shut up Florine in the tower, was trying her best to find a husband for Amabel. She sent messengers to all the princes whom she knew; but no sooner did they arrive than they were sent back again.

7. "If you had come about the Princess Florine," said the various princes, "we would have welcomed you gladly. But as for marrying the Princess Amabel—well, we would rather not have that honour!"

8. Of course this made both the queen and Amabel full of anger and spite against Florine.

"She must be writing letters to all these people, and telling them what is taking place in the kingdom," said the queen. "If that be the case, she is guilty of treason, and should be punished. We must try to prove that it is so."

9. Mother and daughter sat talking over their plans so long, that it was past midnight when they at last made up their minds to go to the tower and question Florine. She was then at the window with the Blue Bird; and her beautiful brown hair was dressed with a care that persons in distress do not usually take. Her room was strewn with most lovely flowers.

10. As the queen listened at the door, she fancied that she heard a song sung by two voices —and it sounded like a song of love! As the

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song ended, she heard one of the singers give a little sigh.

"Ah, my Amabel, here *is* treason!" cried the queen, opening the door and bursting into the room.

11. At sight of her, Florine hardly knew what to do. She opened the window wide, to give the Blue Bird a chance to fly away quickly without being seen. She was very much more afraid for his safety than she was for her own.

12. But the Blue Bird had no power to fly away. His keen eyes had seen that his dear princess was now in great danger, and he felt that he must stay to do what he could—although, to his great grief, he knew that he had no strength to protect her.

13. "Your plots against your king and country are found out," said the queen, as she entered the room, "and even your rank will not save you from punishment."

"Indeed!" said Florine, "and, pray, with whom have I plotted, madam? You have kept me prisoner here these two years, have you not? How many persons have I seen, other than those you have sent to me?"

14. As she was speaking, the queen and Princess Amabel could not help being struck by her great beauty. They were filled with wonder, too, at the richness of her dress, and at the almost dazzling brightness of her jewels.

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15. "And whence came all these beautiful jewels that shine even more brightly than the sun?" asked the queen. "Perhaps you would have me to believe that there is a *jewel-mine* somewhere in the tower!"

"I found them here," said Florine. "That is all I can tell you about them."

The queen looked at Florine very keenly, as if she would read all that was passing in her mind.

16. "You will not deceive us, princess," she said. "You may think you can, but you are wrong. All these jewels have been given you as a bribe to sell your father's kingdom to some enemy."

"Of course, I am just the person who would be able to do that," returned the princess, in scorn. "I, who have been shut up in prison for years, can do a great deal in a plot of that kind, can I not?"

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLUE BIRD IS WOUNDED.

1. The queen then left the tower. A short time afterwards, she sent a young girl, who was in her service, to sleep in the same room as Florine. The girl was to pretend that she had come to be maid to Florine, and to wait upon her. But the princess guessed at once that she had come as a spy.

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2. The princess did not dare now to go to the little window, though she heard the bird flying about it outside. She was longing so much to open it, but she feared the danger to her lover's life. She passed a whole month without once showing herself at the window, and the Blue Bird was in despair.

3. The spy, who had watched day and night for a whole month, became at last so tired that she fell into a deep sleep. Florine saw this, and, opening her little window, she called out, half in fear, half in joy—

"Bird, as blue as heaven's sky,
Hither to me quickly fly!"

4. These were her very words, and the Blue Bird heard them so clearly that he was at the window in an instant. What joy it was to see each other again! How much they had to say to each other! How short the time was for them! So short, indeed, that when the hour of parting came, not half had been said of all that they had in their hearts.

5. Next day, the spy fell asleep again; the princess at once went to the window, and called out as before. The Blue Bird came on the instant; and this night passed, like the other, without the lovers being discovered. They began to think that the spy, having found out how much more comfortable it was to sleep than to stay awake all night, would now make it a practice

'She was then at the window with the Blue Bird.'—*Page* 39.

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to fall asleep at about the same hour. And, indeed, she slept as before on the third evening.

6. But on the fourth evening, the sleeper was disturbed by some noise. So, while seeming to be asleep, she lay awake, listening to all that was said, and peeping as well as she could out of her half-shut eyes. She was amazed to see, by the light of the moon, the most beautiful bird in the world—a bird that spoke in loving words to the princess, and whom she answered in speech just as tender.

7. Day broke. The princess and the Blue Bird bade each other farewell in great sadness, for they both had a strange feeling that some evil was at hand. The princess then flung herself on the bed and wept bitterly, and the Blue Bird flew away. The spy ran to the queen, and told her all that she had seen and heard.

8. The queen then sent the spy back to the tower, telling her not to give any sign that she had seen or heard anything of what befell in the past night, and to pretend, in the following night, to sleep more soundly than before. So, that night, the spy went to bed early, and snored as loudly as she could. The princess, quite deceived, opened the window, and called out:—

"Bird, as blue as heaven's sky,
Hither to me quickly fly!"

9. But in vain she called; the Blue Bird did not come. For the wicked queen had caused

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spears and knives to be tied to the branches of the tree which grew in front of the window; and as the Blue Bird alighted on them quickly, some of them cut his feet. Then he fell on others, which cut his wings and wounded his body. At last, he flew in great pain back to his own tree, leaving a track of blood behind him.

CHAPTER X.

FLORINE SETS FORTH ON A JOURNEY.

1. Now, as you have been told before, King Charming had a friend who was a powerful wizard, and who had presented him with the wonderful winged frogs. The wizard was astonished to see the frogs come back with the chariot, but without the king. After waiting for some time without seeing the king return, the enchanter was so troubled as to what might have happened amiss, that he went eight times round the world in search of his friend, but in vain.

2. He was in the act of making his ninth journey round, when he came into the wood where the Blue Bird now lay sorely wounded. As it was his custom to do every now and then in the course of his journey, he halted here, blew a long blast on his horn, and then cried out, in a loud voice, "King Charming! King Charming! where are you?" King Charming knew the voice at once as that of his best friend.

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3. "Here am I," he answered in a very low voice, for indeed his wounds made him weak. "Come to this tree, and you will see the king whom you love, almost drowned in his own blood." The enchanter could just catch the faint sounds. He looked round about him in surprise, but could see nothing.

4. "I am a blue bird," said the king, in the same feeble voice. Directed by these words, the enchanter soon found him in his little nest.

5. Any other person than the enchanter might have been much surprised to see the king in the form of a blue bird, and would also have been at a loss how to treat his wounds. But *he* knew every trick of magic, and set to work at once. It needed but a few magic words to stop the blood from flowing; then, by using some herbs that he found close by in the wood, and over which he spoke some more words of enchantment, he made the Blue Bird quite well again.

6. The enchanter next begged the king to tell him by what chance he had been changed into a bird, and who it was that had wounded him so badly. The king told him the whole story, and said that it must have been Florine who, in order to escape further punishment, had told the queen of the visits he paid to her.

7. The enchanter begged the king to try to forget all about Florine. "For," said he, "if she will allow you to suffer *this*, there is no telling

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what further harm she may bring upon you." But the Blue Bird would not take his advice, for he still loved Florine very dearly.

8. The Blue Bird now begged his friend to take him home and put him in a cage, where he would be quite safe from sharp weapons and from birds of prey.

"But," asked the enchanter, "can it be your desire to stay for five more years in this state, which so little befits your rank and power? Remember, you have enemies at the palace who would seize your kingdom long before you could regain your proper form."

9. "But can I not enter my palace, and govern as I used to do?" asked the king.

"Oh!" replied his friend, "that would be a difficult matter. Those who stood in awe of you while you were king, would be the first to pluck out your feathers now that you are a little bird."

10. Meantime, the poor young Princess Florine was in despair, since King Charming no longer came to visit her. She wondered if he were still alive, or if he had fallen a victim to the plots of the queen and the Princess Amabel. Sometimes she thought that perhaps he had ceased to love her, and that was the bitterest thought of all.

11. She passed her days and nights at the window, crying out again and again—

"Bird, as blue as heaven's sky,
Hither to me quickly fly!"

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12. The fact that the queen's spy was still with her did not trouble her at all; for she did not care what happened to her. She took hardly any food, and, as you may guess, she soon became very ill.

13. Before long, a change took place in the kingdom. The king, Florine's father, who was now an old man, fell ill. In spite of all that the cleverest doctors in the land could do for him, he became worse and worse, and in a few days he died.

14. The people, who had never really liked either the queen or her daughter, now met together, marched up to the palace, and demanded that Princess Florine should be brought forth from her prison in the tower, as she alone should be their ruler in the time to come.

15. This made the queen very angry. She spoke to the people from a window of the palace, and told them to go quickly to their homes, or they should be severely punished.

16. The queen's haughty manner put the people into a great rage. They broke into the palace, forced their way to the queen's room, seized her, and dragged her into the palace-yard; so furious were they against her, that they there stoned her to death. The Princess Amabel fled to her godmother, the fairy Mazilla, for she was afraid she would suffer the same fate.

17. The lords and wise men of the land met

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at once, and went up to the tower where Florine was lying ill. Entering her room, they flung themselves at her feet, and told her of the great change in her fortune. But she was too ill to care about it. However, they carried her tenderly down the stairs into the large hall of the palace, placed a crown upon her head, and owned her as their queen.

18. Now, of course, Florine had all possible comfort and attention, and every care was taken to bring her back to health. She had a strong wish to set out and seek for the Blue Bird. This desire, and the good treatment she now had from all persons, soon made her well and strong again; and in a little while she was able to appoint a number of the wisest of her nobles to rule the land while she should be away.

19. She then got together a large number of jewels, worth many hundred thousands of pounds. Putting these into a bag, and taking them with her, she set out one evening on her journey, quite alone, and without so much as a word to anyone as to whither she was going.

CHAPTER XI.

KING CHARMING BECOMES HIMSELF AGAIN.

1. Now, King Charming's friend, the wizard, who was trying to help him out of his trouble, had not power enough to undo all that the fairy

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Mazilla had done. He made up his mind, however, to go to the fairy, and see if, by some means or other, the king could not be restored to his own proper form.

2. The enchanter ordered out his chariot with the flying frogs, and off he went to the fairy, who, at the moment he arrived at her palace, was talking to the Princess Amabel. Mazilla received him in quite a friendly manner.

3. "Well," she said, "and what does my cousin want this time?" Such people always address one another as 'cousin.' "Is there anything I can do for you?"

4. "Yes, cousin," replied the enchanter. "I have come about one of my best friends—a poor king whom you have made very unhappy."

5. "Ah, yes! I know whom you mean. He has roused my anger. I am sorry to refuse you any favour, but there is no hope for him, unless he will agree to marry my goddaughter, Amabel."

6. In the end, the enchanter made a bargain with the fairy Mazilla, that she should bring the Princess Amabel to King Charming's palace. Here she should dwell for some months, during which time the king could make up his mind whether he would marry her or not.

During this time, the king was to be restored to his own form, on the understanding that, if in the end he refused to marry Amabel, he should be changed back into a Blue Bird.

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7. The fairy Mazilla gave Amabel some most lovely dresses. Then she mounted her winged horse, seated Amabel on a cushion behind her, and off they flew to the palace of King Charming. The king himself was there, still in the form of a blue bird, with his friend, the enchanter, taking care of him.

8. The fairy gave three taps with her wand, and lo! the Blue Bird vanished, and the king stood forth, as he used to be, handsome, smiling, and richly dressed. How glad he was to be a man once more! But he had to pay a heavy price for his freedom, for the very thought of marrying Amabel made him shudder.

9. Meanwhile, Queen Florine, disguised as a poor girl, with her hair all untidy and hanging down over her face to conceal it, went on her journey. She had an old straw hat on her head; and over her shoulder was slung a sack, containing, you remember, great wealth of jewels.

10. She went on as quickly as she could; but she was always in fear lest at the cross-roads she should turn in the wrong direction, and so go farther away from her dear king.

11. One day, she sat down to rest on the grass by the side of a little stream of clear water; and, her feet being hot and tired with walking, she thought she would bathe them in the cool water.

12. As she sat on the bank, there came along a little old woman, quite feeble and bent, and

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leaning on a stout stick. When she got up to Florine, she stopped and said to her, "What are you doing there, my pretty maiden, all alone?"

13. "My good granny," answered Florine, "the sad thoughts that are ever with me are so many that I have no need of other company"—and at these words her eyes filled with tears.

14. "What! so young, and weeping?" said the good woman. "Ah! my dear child, do not give way to sadness. Tell me all about your trouble; perhaps I may be able to help you."

15. Florine liked the kind voice of the old woman, and at once began to tell the strange story of her love and grief. Having heard her to the end, the little old woman now drew herself up and stood erect. She was no longer bent with age, but was now a lovely woman, young, and most richly dressed. She smiled sweetly at Florine, and said to her—

16. "O fair Florine! the king you seek is no longer a bird. My sister Mazilla, for I am of the fairy-people, has changed him back to his former shape, and he is now in his own kingdom. Do not lose heart; you will reach his palace, and you will succeed in carrying out your purpose.

"Here are four eggs; whenever you are badly in need of help, break one of them, and you will find in it what will be useful to you."

Having said these words, the fairy vanished.

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CHAPTER XII.

FLORINE IN KING CHARMING'S CITY.

1. After walking for eight days and nights without stopping, she came to the foot of a mountain. It was very high, and was all of ivory; the sides were so steep and so smooth that one could not gain a footing on them. Florine tried again and again to climb this mountain, but no sooner had she taken a few steps upward than she slipped down to the bottom again.

2. At last, quite tired out, and in despair of ever getting to the top, she lay down at the foot. All of a sudden, she remembered the eggs that the fairy had given her. She took one of them out of the sack, and broke it. Inside she found some little golden clasps, with sharp spikes sticking out from them!

3. She fastened these clasps to her hands and feet, and started to make one more attempt up the smooth, steep slope. She now found that she could climb it without much trouble. The sharp spikes stuck into the ivory, and kept her from slipping, so that it was not long before she reached the top.

4. But here a new trouble awaited her. On the other side of the mountain, and all across the valley, stretched one solid sheet of glass; and the spikes were of no good for giving her a

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foothold on this. So Florine took out another of the wonderful eggs and broke it. Out of it came two tiny pigeons, and a tiny chariot, which became larger and larger, until it was quite big enough for Florine to be seated in with comfort.

5. She stepped into the chariot, and the pigeons flew lightly with the queen to the other side of the valley.

"My little friends," said Florine to them, "if you will only take me to the palace of King Charming, I should be very grateful to you."

6. The little birds were quite willing, and off they flew once more. They rested neither day nor night, until they came to the ground again at the very gate of King Charming's city. Florine got down from the chariot, and gave each of the birds a sweet kiss.

7. How her heart beat as she passed through the gate! So that no one would know her for a queen, she smeared her face with dirt, and then she asked some of the people where she could see the king.

"He will be coming to the temple to-morrow with the Princess Amabel," they said, "for he has at last agreed to marry her."

8. So grieved was Florine to hear this, that she felt as if her last hour were at hand. She had barely strength to speak or move, and she sat down under a gateway on a heap of stones, her face hidden by her hair and her straw hat.

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9. When people are in deep grief, they seldom have much desire for food; so poor Florine sought out a place where she could stay for the night, and went to bed without supper.

10. Next morning, rising with the sun, she made her way to the temple. She had the very greatest difficulty to get in, as the soldiers on guard would not have her enter, since she was so soiled with the dust and dirt of her long travels.

11. But, in the end, she succeeded in passing them by, and entered the building. Here she saw two thrones, one for King Charming and the other for Amabel. Florine went up and leaned against a marble pillar that stood beside Amabel's throne.

12. The king was the first to arrive, looking, if it might be, more handsome than ever. Amabel followed, dressed in the most costly robes that money could buy, but not looking any better for them. Turning her eyes towards Florine, she frowned at her, and said, in an angry voice, "Who are you that dare to stand so near my throne?"

13. "I am a country-maid," replied Florine, "and I have come a long way to show you some rare things that I have, and to sell them if I can."

14. Then she felt in her bag, and brought out the emerald bracelets that King Charming had given her.

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"Oh!" said Amabel, "those are pretty bits of *glass.* Will you sell them to me? I will give you a four-penny piece for them."

15. "You had better show them to some one who can tell you honestly what they are worth, madam," said Florine.

16. Now, Amabel, who really loved King Charming very dearly, was delighted to have something which she could talk to him about, for it was but seldom that he spoke to her. She therefore showed the bracelets to him, and asked what he thought of them.

17. As soon as he saw them, they brought back to his mind those which he had given to Florine. He gave a great sigh, and said—

"I should think they are worth as much as my kingdom. I thought there was only one such pair in the world, but I find now that there is yet another."

18. Amabel took the bracelets from him; and, turning to Florine, she said, "How much will you sell these trinkets to me for?"

"You would never be able to pay me their full value, madam," Florine replied. "But I will make you an offer. If you will let me sleep for one night in the room of echoes in the palace, I will *give* the emeralds to you."

19. "Very well, have your wish," said Amabel, with a loud laugh, well pleased that she had got the bracelets so easily.

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CHAPTER XIII.

ALL ENDS WELL.

1. Now, you must know that while King Charming was a Blue Bird, he had told Florine that under his rooms in the palace there was another little room called the 'chamber of echoes.' This had been so cleverly built that anything said in it, even though spoken in the lightest whisper, was plainly heard by the king as he lay in his bedroom above.

2. The 'chamber of echoes' thus gave Florine a chance of talking with the king, whom otherwise she would hardly have been able to come near.

3. By order of Amabel, she was brought into the echo-room. As soon as the door was locked and the sound of the servant's footsteps had died away, Florine began to speak aloud.

4. "Cruel Blue Bird!" she said, "is this the way you keep your promise? You have forgotten me, and have given your love to another. Even the bracelets which you gave me in our happier days, did not recall me to your mind!"

5. Then she burst into tears, and sobbed bitterly. And thus she went on, speaking and weeping in turns, until the day broke. The king's man-servant had heard the noise during the night, and in the morning he told the Princess Amabel,

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who therefore asked Florine what she had been doing. Florine replied that she slept so soundly that she often dreamt, and sometimes talked quite loudly in her sleep.

6. As for King Charming, *he* had not heard a word or a sound that Florine had made. Ever since losing her, he had not been able to sleep properly; so, when he went to bed, it was the custom for his servant to give him opium that he might sleep, and obtain a little rest.

7. Florine passed a good part of the next day in great trouble. "If he heard me," she thought, "he has taken no notice. If he did not, what can I do to make him hear?"

8. She had no other things so rich and rare as the bracelets. She had, it is true, plenty of gold and jewels; but she needed something so uncommon that it would take Amabel's fancy.

9. She thought of the eggs once more; and taking another from her bag, she broke it. Out of it there came at once a tiny coach, made of polished steel inlaid with gold. Six tiny green mice were harnessed to the coach, and a little rose-coloured rat was the driver.

10. In the coach were four dancing dolls, very lively and amusing in all their movements, and they could do the most surprising tricks. Florine was delighted with this new wonder, but she kept it to herself until the evening, when Amabel used to go out for a walk each day.

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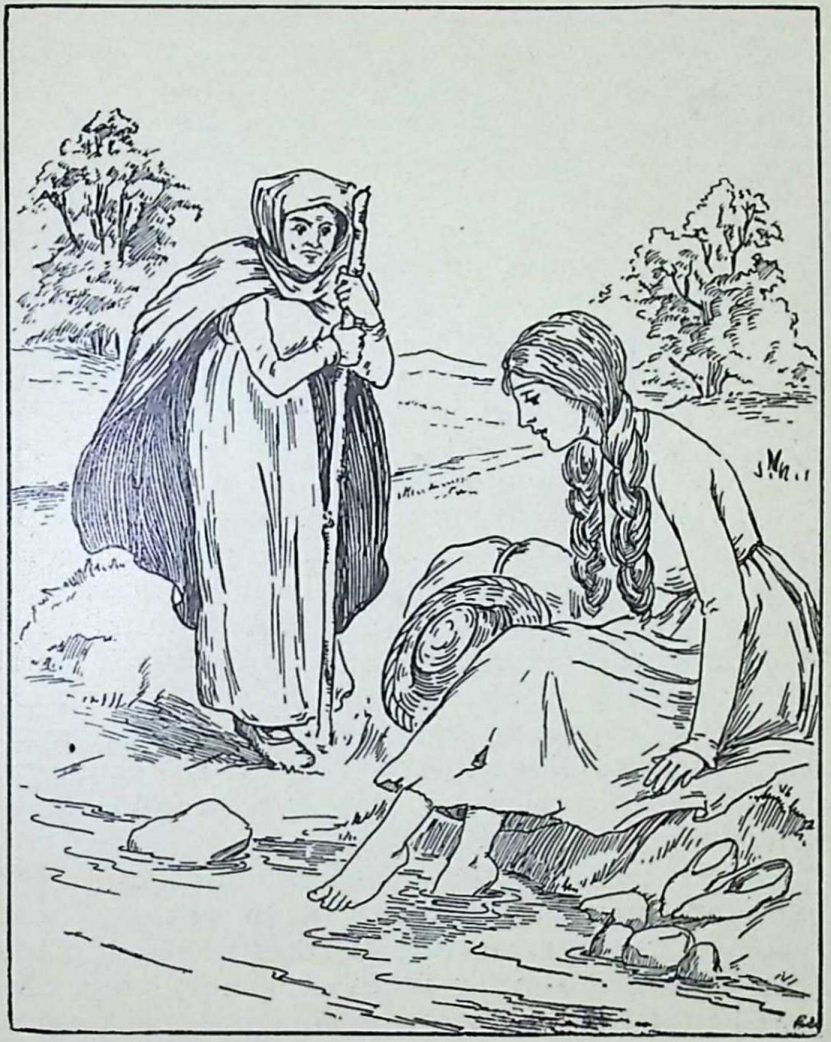

'There came along a little old woman.'—*Page* 51.

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11. Placing herself near one of the walks in the garden, Florine waited till Amabel came along. Then she set the mice off at a gallop; away went the coach, and the rat-coachman, and the dancing dolls that rode inside! Amabel was so charmed at the sight of them that she cried out two or three times, "Girl! will you take a four-penny piece for your set of mice?"

12. "All I ask," said Florine meekly, "is your leave to sleep again in the echo-room."

"Well, we will agree to *that* price," the Princess Amabel made answer—and then, turning to her ladies, she added, "how foolish the girl is to part with these wonderful things for so little!"

13. Night came, and Florine was once more placed in the echo-room. This second night she did not pour forth her complaints, as she had done before, but said all the tender things she could think of. But even these were all in vain! The king had taken his opium, and was so soundly asleep that he heard not a single word.

14. The king's men-servants heard, however, and one of them said to another, "This country-maid is mad, beyond a doubt; or else why should she talk so all night long?"

"She may be," replied the other, "but there seems to me much sense in what she says."

15. Poor Florine was in despair, when she found that her words for the second time had all been lost upon the king. The only thing she

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could now hope for, was that the one egg which remained in her bag would bring help to her.

16. She broke the egg, and out of it there came a pie, containing six birds. But, strange to say, although the birds were cooked, and ready for eating, they began to sing and talk in a most wonderful manner. Florine, delighted with this new marvel, made her way to the little room in which waited those who wished to see the Princess Amabel.

17. As she sat there, one of the king's men-servants came up to her and said, "Girl, if the king did not take opium at night to make him sleep, you would drive him mad with the chatter you keep up the whole night long."

18. "You are mistaken," said Florine. "I have so little fear that I shall disturb the king, that if you will give him no opium to-night, and let me sleep in the echo-room, you shall have these for yourself"—and with these words she showed him a handful of beautiful pearls.

19. The man-servant was only too glad to have the chance of becoming rich so easily, and agreed to do as Florine wished. In a few minutes Amabel came along; and, as she did so, all the birds began to sing together most sweetly.

20. Then one of these strange creatures cried out, "Give me a penny, and I will tell your fortune!"

"I am a doctor," said another of them, in a

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still louder voice, "and I can cure every illness in the world."

21. "Goodness me!" exclaimed Amabel, even more surprised to hear the birds speak thus, than she had been to see the green mice, "what a wonderful pie! I *must* have it. What is your price for it, girl?"

"The same price as before," answered Florine. "Let me sleep again in the echo-room."

"Agreed!" said Amabel, "and here is a florin for you"—for to-day she happened to be in a good temper.

22. When night came, Florine was once more shut in the echo-room; and, when she thought that every one save her beloved would be asleep, she began to speak again.

23. "Cruel King Charming!" she said, "how many dangers have I dared in search of you, and in my longing to look again upon your face! But *you* would cast me out of your remembrance; for now only the false Amabel finds favour in your eyes. Why should you deal with me so ill? Can you have forgotten all my kindness to you when you were the Blue Bird?"—and she recalled to his memory the many promises of faithful love that they had then made one to another.

24. This time, the king was not sleeping, for the man-servant had kept his word. He heard Florine quite well, and knew her voice again; but he could not make out where the voice came

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from. However, he answered it, and so the two lovers kept up their talk for a long time.

25. The king asked where he could find Florine, and she replied that if he would send for the country-maid who had brought the bracelets, *she* would be able to tell him all that he wished to know. At these words the king called his servant, and asked him if he could find this same country-maid and bring her to the palace.

"Nothing is easier, your Majesty," replied his servant, "for at this moment she is sleeping in the echo-room."

26. The king rose at once and dressed in haste. He was completely puzzled. The country-girl with the soiled face and untidy hair could not be his Florine; and yet, if she were not, how came she to know all the secrets of which she had just spoken to him?

27. When he reached the echo-room, what was his delight to see his own dear princess, dressed in a lovely robe of white silk! She had put aside her old dress, under which she had worn the silk robe all along. And her hair no longer tumbled untidily over her face; but, as of old, it floated in long, soft waves about her shoulders. How much they had to say to each other! And how happy they were, as they sat talking together the whole night long!

28. Now it happened that just at this time the enchanter, who was the king's good friend, came

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to the palace, bringing with him the fairy who had given the eggs to Florine. They told King Charming that they had joined their powers together in favour of himself and Florine, and that he need not fear the anger of Mazilla.

29. As they stood talking together, Amabel came into the room. Guess her surprise at seeing beside the king none other than Florine, whom she had thought to be so far away! She was just going to call Florine some unpleasant names, when the fairy stretched out a magic wand and changed her into a crow, which flew out of the open window and was never seen again.

30. There was nothing now to prevent the wedding of King Charming and Florine; and so it took place at once amid great rejoicing.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

This little book is an adaptation of *L'Oiseau Bleu*, one of the most charming of French fairy-tales. It contains many touches of quaint humour and of genuine pathos; and the whole is pervaded with an old-world atmosphere of adventure and romance, such as its little readers will revel in. And, as well as ministering to pleasure, a fairy-tale like this is one of the most appropriate means of *educating* that exceedingly important faculty of the child-mind—imagination.

The original of *The Blue Bird* is by a French woman of letters, Marie Catherine, Countess d'Aulnoy or d'Aunoy* (born about 1650: died in 1705). Her romances are now known only by name; her historical memoirs (of the Courts of France and Spain) are altogether discredited by serious historians; but her *Contes des Fées* (*Tales of the Fairies*) have had a permanent place in the lighter literature of France since their publication in Paris in 1698. Ease and grace of style, daintiness of fancy, and a sprightly and ingenious imagination are the general characteristics of these fairy-tales; one of the best examples of them is *The Blue Bird*, here presented in the form most adapted to the capacity of young children from eight to ten years of age.

* Pronounce *dō-nwä—ō* as in "go"; *ä* as in "all."

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QUESTIONS.

Chapter I.—1. Write down as many differences between Florine and Amabel as you can think of.

Chapter II.—1. In what way did the queen try to prevent King Charming from taking any notice of Florine?

Chapter III.—1. What had the gentleman who waited on King Charming to say about Florine?

2. Why did King Charming return the badges of knighthood and the book of rules?

Chapter IV.—1. How was it that, although King Charming arranged for an interview with Florine, the person he really spoke to was Amabel?

Chapter V.—1. When King Charming and Amabel left the palace, where did they go to?

2. How did the fairy punish the king for refusing to marry Amabel?

Chapter VI.—1. In what way did the queen punish Florine for having won the love of King Charming?

2. Tell me how the Blue Bird discovered where Florine was kept a prisoner..

Chapter VII.—1. What presents did the Blue Bird bring to Florine?

Chapter VIII.—1. Why did the Queen and Amabel visit Florine in the tower, and what did they discover when they arrived there?

Chapter IX.—1. Tell me how the Blue Bird was wounded.

Chapter X.—1. How did Florine become free to set forth on a journey?

Chapter XI.—1. What bargain did the enchanter make with the Fairy Mazilla with regard to King Charming?

Chapter XII.—1. How did Florine cross the ivory mountain and the valley of glass?

Chapter XIII.—1. Tell me how the story ends.

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